

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

0315863404

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Iron Monger's House, Avalon Iron Works

AND/OR COMMON

Schnoerr house

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

201 Gun Road

CITY, TOWN

Ellicott City/Catonsville ☒ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Baltimore

3 CLASSIFICATION**CATEGORY**☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT**OWNERSHIP**☒ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED**STATUS**☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS**ACCESSIBLE**☐ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☒ NO**PRESENT USE**☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☐ PARK☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

Taylor Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Annapolis

VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21401

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Baltimore County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

401 BOSLEY AVE.

CITY, TOWN

Towson

STATE

Maryland

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION**CONDITION**☒ EXCELLENT☐ GOOD☐ FAIR☐ DETERIORATED☐ RUINS☐ UNEXPOSED**CHECK ONE**☐ UNALTERED☒ ALTERED (interior)**CHECK ONE**☒ ORIGINAL SITE☐ MOVED DATE _____**DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

A double house of rubble stone with dressed quoins, four bays wide overall, two rooms deep, and two stories high under a gable roof, ridge parallel to the facade (south elevation?). The facade is symmetrically composed, with two central doors flanked by single windows on the first floor, and four windows on the second. There is no basement. The gable-end walls are blank except for two small attic windows flanking each of the two gable-wall chimneys. The rear elevation is similar to the facade, except in that the western door has been closed and replaced with a window, and a shed roofed porch with raised deck has been added across the entire first story. There is a new shingle roof. All windows are 6/6 double-hung sash. All openings have large granite lintels. The entrance doors are of four panels with four-light transoms.

The interior has been altered significantly to adapt the house for use by a single family. The present plan is four rooms of roughly equal size on each floor, with an added bathroom on the second floor. There is an original fireplace winder in the east end.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

3 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Iron Monger's House is the only above-ground representative of the once massive Avalon Iron Works, founded by Caleb Dorsey as the Eckridge Furnace in 1755. The operation of the Avalon Furnace was critical to the development of the Patapsco Valley as an early industrial enclave. The plant was destroyed in the flood of 1868, along with most of the industry of the Patapsco Valley.

The 1820s double house was most likely "company housing" for the families of two workers of relatively low status, probably not for the iron monger, and was probably built during the early tenure of the Quaker Ellicott family.

Originally, the house appears to have been precisely symmetrical, with two small rooms on each floor in each half, with fireplace-closet-winder combination in each gable end wall.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

John D. Hnedak, Historic Sites Survey Team Captain

ORGANIZATION

Maryland Historical Trust

DATE

1978-79

STREET & NUMBER

21 State Circle

TELEPHONE

269-2438

CITY OR TOWN

Annapolis

STATE

Maryland 21401

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES Unknown

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The two stone houses at Avalon are survivals of a series of industrial enterprises that flourished in the Patapsco Valley from about 1761 onward. Caleb Dorsey, Ironmaster, purchased the tracts Taylor's Forest and Long Acre in 1761, and at the time of his death some eleven years later, his inventory showed him the owner of a forge: Dorsey's Forge, the site under discussion. This forge apparently supplied bayonets and forged items such as swivels during the Revolutionary War, but probably did not make cannon, as has been claimed, because cannon were the product of a smelting furnace where molten metal was readily available. The cannon made in this vicinity were most likely cast at Elkridge Furnace in Howard County.

The grounds at Dorsey's Forge were also used for William Whetcroft's Slitting Mill in 1775 under agreement with Samuel Dorsey. The slitting mill sliced bar iron into sheets that could be further cut up into rods or strips for heading by hand into nails. This was a new product for the American colonies, at least for Maryland, and the General Assembly voted Whetcroft start-up funds as a step toward self-sufficiency. (1)

Neither the 1798 tax list nor the 1804 inventory of Edward Dorsey of Caleb is there mention of stone houses. (2)

Dorsey's Forge was offered for sale in 1815 following a family lawsuit, and the for-sale advertisement mentioned a "dwelling house," but that structure could well have been a frame dwelling found in the Edward Dorsey inventory. (3)

Several members of the Ellicott family purchased the works and by the time of the 1820 census were doing a considerable business in nail making both here and at their earlier site near present Granite Hill-Oella. The firm traded under the name of Evan T. Ellicott and Company, with an output of \$120,000 per annum in sheet iron, boiler plate, nail plates, nails, and brads as reported on the census form of 1820. The seven Ellicott partners conveyed their personal shares to the newly incorporated Avalon Company in March 1823, and in this deed, the name "Avalon" was used for the first time and superseded "Dorsey's Forge." The preamble to the act of incorporation stated of the Ellicotts that "they are the proprietors of certain tracts situated on and contiguous to the Patapsco Falls, that on said lands they have extensive water

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

(continued)

power, capable of being advantageously used for various manufacturing purposes; that they have already erected thereon suitable buildings, and are prosecuting an extensive manufacturing of rolled and sheet iron, and nails; and they are desirous of increasing their capital stock for the purpose of extending their improvements." (4)

The old Avalon Nail Works burned down in 1845 and a new plant was built by John McCrone and Company who purchased the area south of the B. & O. tracks. McCrone was back in business by the time of the 1850 census, with an annual output of 40,000 kegs of nails. Singewald in his 1911 study of the State's iron industry states that the practically new installation was pulled down in 1954 and replaced by a large steam-powered works with seven puddling furnaces, three trains of rolls, and 44 nail machines. (5)

The house on the northside of the tracks at 301 Gun Road (the Bruns house) was part of the Andrew Ellicott property, and upon his insolvency, it was advertised for sale. (6)

John Chandler Smith, owner of the adjoining property called "Waveland" bought the property (7) and deeded it to his daughter Matilda Frances Smith in 1884. (8) In 1892, Miss Smith sold $2\frac{1}{4}$ acres, the present lot size, to Edward James Turner for \$1,500. (9) The 1896 tax ledger for District 13 is missing, but the 1911 ledger calls it a double house. Turner sold to J. Edward Bruns in 1912, and the 1918 tax ledger showed dimensions of the structure as 36 X 36, its value \$1,296. (10) This house still remains in the Bruns family. It could conceivably date to the 1815-1822 building program of the Ellicott family. It seems to match up with a square shown on the 1850 map by J. C. Sidney; it certainly existed by 1851 and can be identified in the Sachse Lithograph of c. 1857. (11)

The great flood of July 24, 1868, heavily damaged the Avalon works, which was at that time owned by H. L. Brooke and Company. It was never put back into service. Water reached the second floor of the 301 Gun Road house.

The 1876 tax ledger listed Avalon Iron Works with "22 buildings as per field book," with a total value of \$6,585. The 1877 atlas by G. M. Hopkins shows the scattered buildings of the Avalon Forge Company, but only a few houses appeared in Bromley's 1898 atlas. About 1910, the Baltimore County Water and Electric Company headed by Victor Bloede acquired the iron works site and put up a new generation of industrial buildings to filter and pump water for the southwestern corner of the county and city. The old dam was rebuilt as a hydroelectric plant with its generators housed inside the dam. The new buildings were found in the 1911 tax ledger, along with a Corliss steam engine, centrifugal pumps, and two electrical generators. The 1918 tax ledger lists "Stone House at Avalon" (\$1610) as well as a frame house (\$966), and three other houses (total value of \$1449). The 1915 Bromley atlas, Plate 5, showed the electrical buildings. On that map, present River Road was "Edgewood Avenue," and Avalon Forge Road had become Gun Road. The brick pumping station buildings were aligned with their ridge lines perpendicular to the river, whereas the two main buildings of the old nail works had been aligned in parallel to the banks, largely ruling out the possibility that the 20th Century works was an adaptation of the old structures. The Sachse lithograph does show one long building set perpendicular to the river bank, but its design includes a monitor clerestory that bears no resemblance to the filtration plant.

The electrical and water works was acquired by Baltimore City in 1922, but the installation was obsolete by 1926, and in 193_, the tract was acquired by the State to develop as a part of the Patapsco State Park. The old stone dwelling, 201 Gun Road, was occupied by a Baltimore City employee, George Schnoerr, who was allowed to stay on under lease by the Park Service. That house is most likely one of the "two stone dwellings" advertised in the 1852 settlement of John McCrone's Estate. (12)

The river bottom was subjected to further devastation by the flood of June 1972, when the Patapsco cut a new path around the dam and heavily damaged the dam, pump house, and sand filter plant. The Schnoerr House was flooded but 301 Gun Road was spared. The State Board of Public Works decided in 1978 to demolish the pumping buildings, but as of early 1979, there were no funds budgeted for the project. The dam, which was to have been restored under the first plan, was opposed by environmentalists and by the Corps of Engineers and was undergoing demolition in April of 1979. The only structures in good condition at this once-busy site are the stone house in the park and the Bruns house. (13)

Note: As of the time of writing, the private owner of No. 301 Gun Road had not decided whether or not to volunteer the house for the Preliminary Landmarks List.

NOTES:

1. John W. McGrain, "The Development and Decline of Dorsey's Forge," Maryland Historical Magazine, 72 (Fall, 1977): 346-352.
2. Chancery Papers No. 2383, Hall of Records.
3. Federal Gazette, October 21, 1815, p. 1.
4. Laws of Maryland, Acts of 1822, Chapter 199.
5. Joseph T. Singewald, Report on the Iron Ores of Maryland (Baltimore, 1911), p. 173.
6. Baltimore American, April 21, 1851.
7. B.C. Deeds, HMF 9:532.
8. B.C. Deeds, WMI 141:363.
9. B.C. Deeds, LMB 194:551.
10. B.C. Tax Ledgers, District 13:1911, f. 20; 1918, f. 99.
11. Lois B. McCauley, Maryland Historical Prints (Baltimore, 1975), p. 107.
12. American, May 31, 1852.
13. Park Superintendent Donald G. Gaber to author, April 4, 1979.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Joseph T. Singewald, Report on the Iron Ores of Maryland (Baltimore, 1911).

J. W. McGrain, "The Development and Decline of Dorsey's Forge," Maryland Historical Magazine, 72 (Fall, 1977): 346-352.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 199.55 acres

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Park area near stone house located mainly south of B. & O. and north bank of Patapsco. House site portion is east of Gun Road.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE None

COUNTY None

STATE

None

COUNTY

None

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

John W. McGrain

ORGANIZATION

Baltimore County Office of Planning and Zoning

STREET & NUMBER

401 Bosley Avenue

CITY OR TOWN

Towson, Maryland 21204

DATE

May 1979

TELEPHONE

494-3495

STATE

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4345000m N.

4344

4343

4342

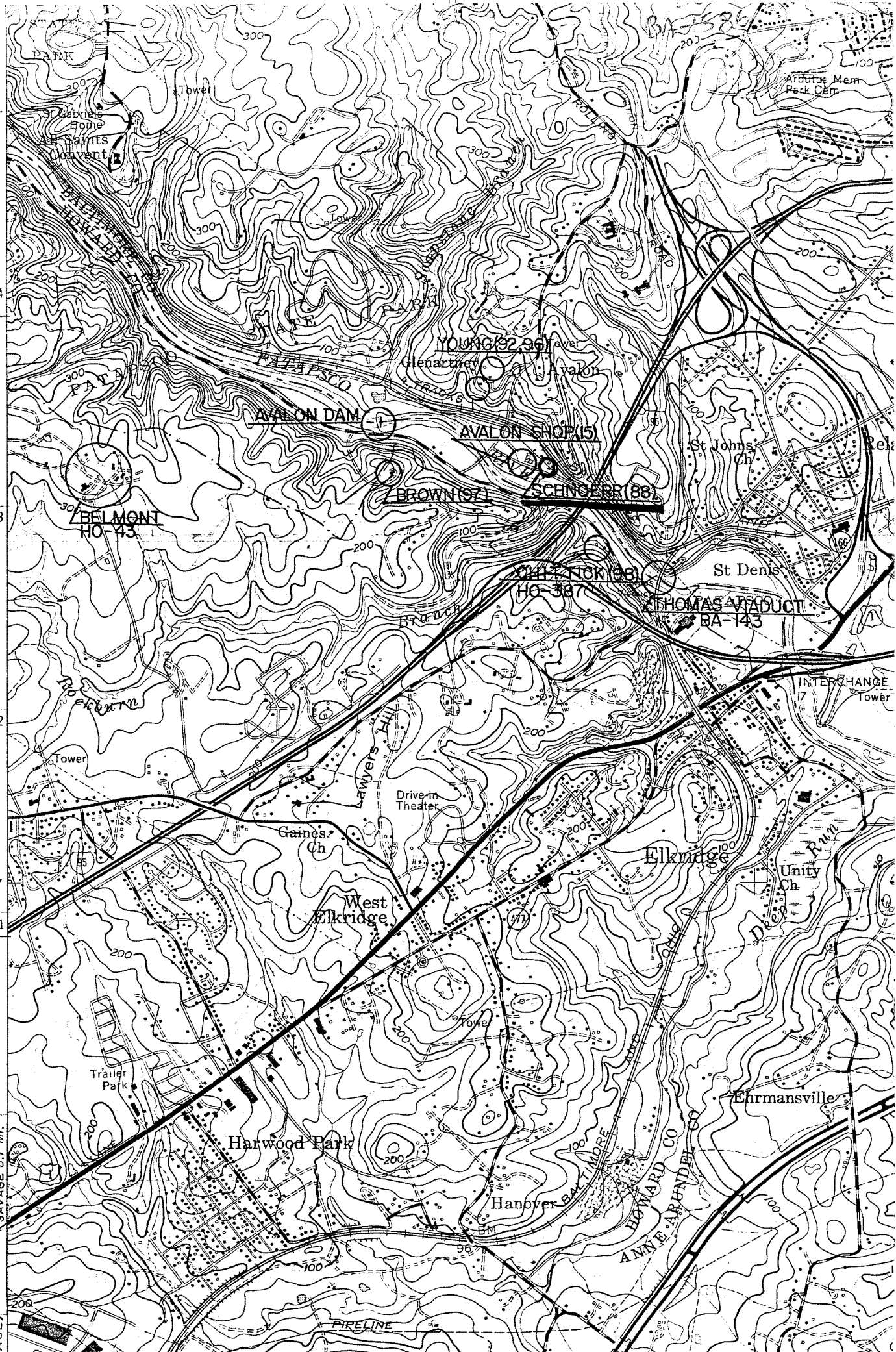
4341

12'30"

WASHINGTON, D.C. 27 MI.
SAVAGE 5.7 MI.

III NE
(AGE)

RELAY
QUAD





BA-1586



BA-1586